

The National Teaching Repository: A Case Study

Sharing effective interventions:

Learning from each other so that we can continue to enhance and improve what we do

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1. Introduction

This report follows on from an exploratory study undertaken as a result of a successful Advance HE Good Practice Grants Projects Award (2020). Developed under the banner of '*Successful transitions: what works for different student groups?*' the project evolved from, and as such builds upon, practice embedded at Edge Hill University.

This report begins by outlining the origins and rationale behind the original work, and then Project Lead Dr Dawne Irving-Bell, a Senior Learning and Teaching Fellow at Edge Hill University, goes on to detail the project aims, how it has been implemented to date, concluding by presenting evidentiary impact on learning and teaching of this innovative work to date.

1.1 Origins: How the project evolved

As is perhaps typical across the sector, emergent 'good practice' cited within institutional external examiner reports and examples which surface during validation events are systematically collated with a view to disseminating across the wider faculty and on occasion (as is appropriate) across the institution which such practices can be seen to be inter-disciplinary.

Of particular interest are the 'proven in practice' strategies designed to support students' induction into, and transition through, their studies in Higher Education. These are practical strategies utilised by colleagues to meet the needs of a diverse student body. Edge Hill University is an institution where widening participation is at the heart of our ethos, this includes commuter students, those with protected characteristics and individuals considered to have 'non-traditional entry qualifications' (notably those with BTEC/T-Levels and our international students), all of whom are likely to have inherently different approaches to their studies.

There can be no doubt that effective induction supports a student's transition into Higher Education, positively impacting on retention. Alongside an initial induction, we have found that learners also require support at transition points over the duration of their studies. This is most notable when students transition between different levels of programmes undertaken over several years. Our experience shows us that an increase in the academic demands between level 4 and level 5, or level 5 and level 6 tend to be pivotal moments in the student journey. Managing academic expectations, coupled with the need for students to be more autonomous and independent in their learning and thinking proves, for some, to be particularly troublesome.

We have found that timely interventions and carefully designed strategies, based on an individual student's academic and pastoral journey, lead to tangible improvements in the overall student experience. For those where this is applicable, it is frequently beyond the scope of detail often found in curriculum design documentation considered at the point of validation. It is complementary to the formal support offered at induction and transition and it considers attainment and engagement of learners at an individual level.

Unearthing strategies has proven to be a relatively straight forward process, likewise dissemination, however implementation and adoption of an idea or strategy outside of the originating department or faculty where has proven to be somewhat more problematic.

1.2 An institutional approach

So, at Edge Hill University, determined these ideas should not go unseen we sought to devise a process through which each idea (the identified citation of notable practice) could be evaluated and reviewed in terms of its potential for wider dissemination beyond its original context.

The National Teaching Repository:

‘Citable, sharable, discoverable’

Having brought a strategy to the fore a simple three step process was devised:

+ Step One

Following identification, preparatory work involved scrutinising and analysing the strategy. This involved evaluating the strategy to determine how, and why, it worked. For example, we looked not only at disciplinary approaches (pedagogy) but considered the areas ethos and culture, student staff ratio and physical teaching environment which supported the decision in deciding if those conditions could be successfully replicated in order to ensure maximum success from the strategy under consideration.

+ Step Two

Having established if the idea was replicable, the next stage involved exploring the strategy's potential for transferability, to determine if it would be likely to really work in different circumstances. This part of the process involved a pilot phase, where an area/discipline is matched with the 'tried and tested' strategy. The impact of this was noticeable and it helped significantly to ensure the innovation (strategy) would be more likely to be adopted, directly or with a little adaption, in meeting the needs of the identified student group(s), before wider dissemination.

+ Step Three

At the heart of this work is not only the identification but the effective dissemination and implementation of the practice. Therefore, having established which strategies were transferable and suitable for universal dissemination, our final step and perhaps the biggest challenge, was determining which mechanisms would be most suitable to ensure effective dissemination and how best to then support colleagues to embed the work within their own practice.

1.3 Ensuring effective dissemination

Typically, dissemination involved traditional approaches such as professional staff development workshops and bespoke (tailored) activity for those unable to make use of pre-arranged staff development workshops. However, quite often, despite their willingness to attend, feedback frequently cited that physical attendance was a barrier, and hence a barrier to effective dissemination and ultimately to improving practice.

In seeking alternative mechanisms for dissemination, we established our virtual, searchable 'What Works' Good Practice database. A space where we could store the wonderful, innovative ideas and best practice from across the institution in a way that was freely accessible to colleagues to browse and refer to as they needed to.

As news and engagement with 'What Works' Good Practice virtual space (a blog created using WordPress) spread, we found that the increased active engagement with staff development led to the wider dissemination and adoption of identified strategies, at all levels (programme/subject, department and faculty) across the institution.

In addition to the anticipated outcomes (i.e.: increased engagement with staff development) this approach yielded unanticipated benefits:

- + The first was targeted staff development events. So, the virtual space enabled us to view data about how and when staff engaged with development opportunities in a way that we had not been able to access previously. Coupled with our knowledge of institutional activity, the data also gave us an insight into understanding why staff were engaging with development opportunities when they did. So, for example, we noted significantly increased traffic to and from (searching and downloading) the virtual sharing space at the points within our academic year immediately prior to validation of new programmes. This enabled us to be proactive and ensure that high quality, appropriate materials, and resources are always in place and accessible, in advance of when they are needed in this context.
- + The second unanticipated benefit has been the use of the database by colleagues as a tool to support their own personal and professional development. For example, in sharing their practice, colleagues have been able to evidence the wider impact of their practice across their faculty and the wider institution, and in some cases beyond. This evidence has been used increasingly by colleagues during performance review, to support application of UKPSF application and to secure both internal and external promotion.

The National Teaching Repository:

'Sharing resources amongst teachers and researchers that will have a positive impact on teaching and learning'.

1.4 Project aims

The aim of this Advance HE Good Practice Grant project was (and still is) to create additional channels for use across the sector that support colleagues to share and disseminate practice to support colleagues to strategically implement effective interventions that lead to an improved student experience which of course has the additional benefit of supporting student retention.

Building upon the notion that all too often great ideas are hidden within subject silo's, and even when they are brought to the fore, they are considered to be of little value or use outside of the originating discipline. This project's aim was to explore mechanisms that would be effective in supporting colleagues to express and exchange ideas and to create a space where they could share opinions and seek out solutions to challenges identified with their implementation. With the overarching purpose to support student induction into, and transition through, their chosen Higher Education programme.

Specifically, the project aimed to:

- + Share Edge Hill University's conceptual framework (our virtual database of accessible and innovative ideas) and dissemination methods to support others in the effective development of their own approaches.
- + Create an online forum via an induction and transitions space within the AdvanceHE Connect network to encourage discourse and to share best practice.
- + Establish a central repository, a single national database where tried and tested approaches, ideas from across the sector may be housed, harvested, and accessed.

The National Teaching Repository



Figure 1

The next section of this report (Section 2) outlines our approach and provides an update on the generic project aims, before moving to articulate how, supported by funding from AdvanceHE we established a National Teaching Repository (Figure 1).

2. Impact to date

As mentioned in Section 1, this project built upon established work, under the Advance HE Good Practice Grant banner. Having established an induction and transitions space within Advance HE's Connect network, and through workshops and conference presentations we have been able to share our University's conceptual framework.

The fundamental aim of this project was to establish a national repository, a space where anyone and everyone with an interest in supporting development in this field can view, download, share and browse the very best of ideas and strategies. It was also envisaged that these resources could be used 'off the shelf' as transferable strategies for immediate application, or with adaption to meet different needs identified in the context of the user downloading and accessing the original material(s).

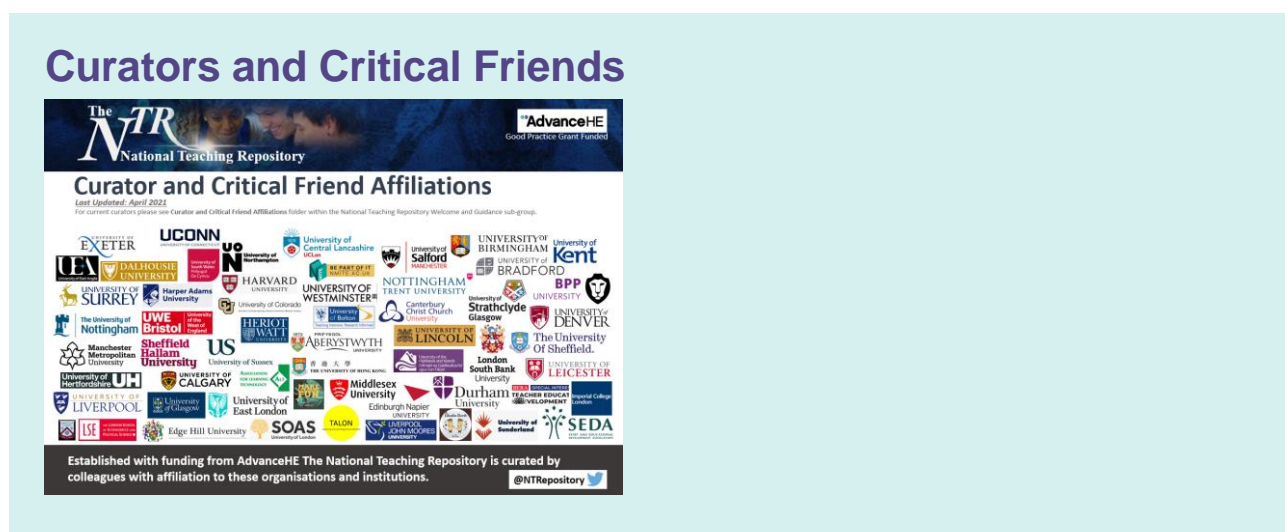


Figure 2

¹ Footnote:

Irving-Bell, D. (2020). The National Teaching Repository. In The Blog of the Association of NTF with CATEs. <https://ntf-association.com/impact/the-national-teaching-repository/>

However, we recognised that without the engagement of the academic community we would not be able to realise the potential of this ambitious project beyond the confines of our own institution. Hence, we sought to establish a network of critical friends and academic partners (please see Figure 2 and Section 4.3). Our critical friends suggest ways that we can develop and improvement the repository, and this strategy has enabled us to extend the reach of our work while maintaining quality.

The National Teaching Repository:

‘...an open access online searchable database where tried and tested strategies ‘that work’ can be housed and harvested’

With an ever-growing network of academic partners, curators, and critical friends, we are able to maximise the potential of the project to facilitate real impact across the sector. Drawing from an expanding and extensive pool of diverse strategies ‘in use’ that are already making a real difference to both staff and students, we are meeting our aim of providing high-quality, easily accessible scholarly support to as many colleagues as we can because ‘better’ support for staff equals ‘better’ outcomes for students.

2.2 Establishing the National Teaching Repository

The National Teaching Repository is an Open Educational Resource (OER). An open access, online searchable database where tried and tested strategies ‘that work’ can be housed and harvested. A space that anyone can search to access hands-on, practical ideas and resources, either to use as ‘off the shelf’ transferable strategies for immediate direct application, or with adaption to meet the needs of their own context. Sharing innovations and strategies provides colleagues with access inspirational ideas, but the repository also offers opportunities for authors to upload and share their teaching resources, pedagogical research, approaches, and ideas in a safe and secure way (please see Section 2.4 for details of how and where the repository is housed). Securing recognition for the scholarship of their teaching and learning research and resources in a way that also allows colleagues to evidence of the impact of their work in practice.

Celebrating the diversity of teaching and learning practice, the repository facilitates the ability to showcase best practice in a range of non-traditional research formats including:

- + Papers and Reports
- + Power Point Presentations
- + Teaching Resources and Materials.
- + Data and Code
- + Images
- + Video and Audio Recordings
- + Posters

2.3 Disseminating accessible ideas that work

The National Teaching Repository is an inclusive, developmental space where anyone with an interest in the scholarship of teaching and learning and supporting developments in this field can create, share information and knowledge, and access the very best ideas.

It is a space where teaching, learning and research materials reside in the public domain (under copyright that have been released under an open license²) facilitating free access for re-use and/or adaptation by others.

In addition to sharing high-quality scholarly outputs, the aim of the repository is to create a community where colleagues become more comfortable in talking about and sharing their teaching and learning practice.

2.4 How does it work?

The National Teaching Repository is housed at Edge Hill University and sits within a digital platform called [Figshare](#). FigShare is a digitally trusted platform ([ISO27001 Certified](#)) and public pages on Figshare are compliant with the following accessibility standards:

- + European accessibility standard [EN301549](#)
- + [WCAG 2.1 AA](#)
- + [Section 508](#)

The National Teaching Repository:

A repository of collaboratively generated 'proven in practice, tried and tested' strategies.

The National Teaching Repository guidance for authors aligns with best practice for managing outputs on Figshare and before submitting work for publication requires authors to consider:

- + Ethical obligations
- + Copyright

²Footnote:

Defined by Unesco² (2021) open license refers to a license that respects the intellectual property rights of the copyright owner and provides permissions granting the public the rights to access, re-use, re-purpose, adapt and redistribute educational materials. Available at Unesco (2021) <https://en.unesco.org/themes/building-knowledge-societies/oer/recommendation>

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Dr Dawne Irving-Bell

To help assure quality all research and resources submitted to The National Teaching Repository are checked prior to publication. This occurs via a team of curators (please see Section 2.8), members of the project team and at Edge Hill University there is a dedicated member of staff within Library Services who oversees the Figshare system and monitors every item uploaded prior to publication.

To manage submissions, we established a series of folders called collections. Submitting authors simply decide where their work sits best and upload it into the repository through an open access portal.

When uploading authors can assign categories and key words that will help colleagues to find work easily, and collection curators are on hand to help ensure work is in the most appropriate space to support making the work visible (for more information about the role of the curator please see Section 2.8).

2.5 What are the benefits of sharing work?

In addition to supporting others to develop their practice and positively impacting on the student experience across the sector, uploading scholarly teaching and learning work into The National Teaching Repository has tangible personal and professional benefits. In sharing their high-quality scholarly activity authors can secure recognition for their practice beyond their own institution. [Altmetric](#) data is embedded into the system which enables colleagues to measure the impact of individual items they share. Authors are also able to set their own level of [Creative Commons](#) (CC) licence to protect their academic and intellectual property.

Authors can, should they so wish, link their work to their personal [ORCID ID](#), and request a unique [DOI](#) for each item shared.

Specifically, the system:

- + Generates a citation so that others can acknowledge use of work.
- + Enables a link to the authors [ORCID ID](#).
- + Supports the generation of a unique [DOI](#) for each item uploaded.
- + Facilitates instant sharing via social media.
- + Uses [Altmetric](#) data to evidence the impact of the work.
- + Set their own [Creative Commons](#) (CC) licence level.
- + Allows the creation of a Profile to help direct traffic back to institutional and/or personal websites and blog spaces.

Authors may also use evidence of the impact of their work to help secure a new job or promotion, as evidence for performance review or internal progression or to support a Fellowship or National Teaching Fellowship application.

2.6 Acknowledging academic and intellectual property

The National Teaching Repository is an Open Education Resource (OER) where readers can browse and download resources as often as they like. In drawing on the practice of others, just as you would with other forms of academic work, the repository encourages colleagues to respect the intellectual property of the originating author(s) and recognise their effort and work accordingly. Authors retain all rights to their work and during the process of submitting in addition to the allocation of a [DOI](#) colleagues can select the level of [Creative Commons](#) (CC) licencing they deem most appropriate to support availability for others to build upon and legally share their work.

2.7 Curated practice from across the sector

Within the repository we have a series of collections. These are folders that help us to organise submissions logically, which in turn helps others to search for and locate examples of innovative practice more easily.

A list of our current collections can be found below and provides an insight as to the breadth of work currently located within the repository. We are continuously revising and updating the repository, with new collections added frequently and if you have an idea for a new collection please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Please note: We advocate for inclusive practice, and as such, irrespective of the topic or theme of work authors share, equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) is integral to and considered within each submission. As such EDI is embedded throughout the repository, and hence is not a standalone collection.

Currently the repository has the following collections to help organise pedagogical practice:

- + Assessment and Feedback.
- + Community, Belonging and Wellbeing.
- + Continuing your Professional Development.
- + #CreativeHE.
- + Digital Education.
- + Flexible, Open and Social Learning.
- + HEI Enterprise Partnerships.
- + ICTs and Intercultural Learning.
- + Institutions, Organisations and Keynotes.
- + Students as Partners.
- + Supporting the Student Experience.
- + The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL).
- + Welcome and Guidance.
- + Visual Thinking.

2.8 The role of the curator

In addition to using the digitally trusted Figshare platform which is housed within Edge Hill University (where in addition to the project team we have a dedicated member of staff who oversees the system), each collection within the repository has at least one curator.

Curators add an additional layer of Quality Assurance (QA), and their role is similar to an editor. Curators organise and curate the submitted content, they are not there to judge or reject submissions, but to help monitor and enhance the quality of work submitted. For example, to ensure that work shared is ethical, accessible, and housed in the most appropriate place. Curators review each submission carefully, but it is the authors' responsibility to ensure the item is ethically sound, accurate, free of typographical or referencing errors, and is compliant in terms of accessibility.

Curators can also support colleagues in making work visible, by promoting it using social media for example.

Guidance for both curators and authors is available within The National Teaching Repository which echo Figshare's 'best practice for managing outputs' guidance that can be accessed here: <https://help.figshare.com/article/best-practice-for-managing-your-outputs-on-figshare>

3. Next steps

3.1 Developing the repository

As the repository grows it is the intention to add more collections to meet the evolving needs and demands of the sector. It is also our intention to review the system and based upon technical advancements, and feedback to make stepped improvements.

The National Teaching Repository:

'...browse, view and download the very best ideas either to use as 'off the shelf' transferable strategies or with adaption to meet the needs of your context'.

3.2 Personal and Professional developmental opportunities

We are very keen to create as many opportunities for colleagues to receive recognition for what they do, not only through sharing their practice, but as curators and editors. We know that this will support them in their careers, in gaining national recognition and in enhancing their academic reputations. It is our intention that curators if they so wish would 'move on' after 12- 18 months, perhaps into a mentoring role, to support a new curators thus opening similar opportunities for personal and professional growth and development for others.

4. Further information and contact details

4.1 Locating the repository

Locating the repository and securing access to information and guidance is straight forward. The repository is hosted within Edge Hill University's Figshare area and is accessible via these links:

- + Discover research from The National Teaching repository:
https://figshare.edgehill.ac.uk/The_National_Teaching_Repository
- + For further information: [https://figshare.edgehill.ac.uk/articles/presentation/NTR -
_Welcome_pdf/12673016](https://figshare.edgehill.ac.uk/articles/presentation/NTR_-_Welcome_pdf/12673016)
- + To submit to the National Teaching Repository: <https://figshare.edgehill.ac.uk/submit>
- + You can follow the National Teaching Repository on Twitter: @NTRepository
<https://twitter.com/NTRepository>
- + Visit the repository website: <https://ntrepository.wordpress.com/home/>

4.2 Acknowledgements and contact information

We would like to acknowledge Megan Hardeman, Head of Engagement at Figshare and Liam Bullingham, our National Teaching Repository Technical Director and Research Support Librarian at Edge Hill University for their hard work and ongoing commitment to help ensure the success of this project.

The repository is hosted within Edge Hill University's Figshare area and is curated by colleagues from a growing number of institutions across the sector. This is not a closed shop, and the more colleagues that contribute to the repository the richer it will become. Not only as a source of innovative ideas helping to improve what we do, but through sharing our practice we can be proactive in helping to create opportunities that are supportive of colleagues personal and professional development.

For further details about the project, or information about how you can get involved, whether that be to curate a folder, or if you are interested in becoming a critical friend please do not hesitate to get in touch.

We would be delighted to hear from you.

Kindest
Dawne

Dr Dawne Irving-Bell belld@edgehill.ac.uk

4.3 Curators and critical friends

With sincere thanks to our repository curators and critical friends:

Aberystwyth University	Mary Jacob, Kate Wright,
Canterbury Christ Church University	Dr Scott Turner,
BPP University	Claire Moscrop, David Wooff,
Durham University	Rachelle O'Brien,
Dalhousie University	Dr Jill McSweeney,
Edge Hill University	Helena Knapton, Professor Mark Schofield, Professor Vicky Duckworth, Sarah Wright,
Edinburgh Napier University	Katrina Swanton,
Harper Adams University	Emily Chapman-Waterhouse,
Harvard University	Dr Patrice Torcivia Prusko,
Heriot Watt University	Dr Anne Margaret Tierney,
Hong Kong University	Professor David Carless,
Imperial College London	Dr Richard Bale,
Liverpool John Moores University	Matt McLain, Dr Deborah Callaghan, Professor Debbie Roberts,
London South Bank University	Dr Safia Barikzai,
London School of Economics	Alex Spiers
Manchester Metropolitan University	Dr Chrissi Nerantzi
Middlesex University	Dr Emily McIntosh
New Model Institute for Technology and Engineering (NMITE)	Dr Beverley Gibbs,
Nottingham Trent University	Dr Kate Cuthbert, Laura Stinson
Nottingham University	Dr Christina Sietou,

Prifysgol De Cymru, University of South Wales	Dr Mark Davies,
Sheffield Hallam University	Sue Beckingham,
SOAS, University of London	Professor David Webster,
The University of Birmingham	Danielle M Hinton,
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The University of East London	Santanu Vasant,
The University of Exeter	Dr Dawn Lees,
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The National Teaching Repository:

***“Sharing effective interventions, learning from each other so that we can
continue to enhance and improve what we do”***



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